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UNCLAS LIMA 004650

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ATTEMPT TO FACILITATE PASSAGE OF MACRO-REGION REFERENDA FAILS IN CONGRESS

REF: A. LIMA 4634

[B.](#) LIMA 4633

[¶](#)1. Despite a furious last-minute push from President Alejandro Toledo, with support from presidential hopefuls Lourdes Flores and Valentin Paniagua, proponents of legislative changes to facilitate the passage of the 10/30 macro-region referenda (Refs) failed to obtain the necessary 61-vote absolute majority (the final vote was 60-24 with three abstentions) in a 10/27 Congress session. The opposition APRA and Peru Ahora parties voted against, as expected. The major surprise was that four members of Lourdes Flores' Unidad Nacional alliance chose to absent themselves just before the vote, despite that legislative bloc's prior indication that it would heed her call to support the bill. Had even one of the four voted "yes," the legislation would have passed.

[¶](#)2. The proposed bill provided that only "yes" and "no" votes would be counted to determine whether the 50 percent-plus-one majority for approval of each macro-region was reached. It also provided for a follow-up referenda in the case where two or more (but not all) of the departments that would make up a macro-region voted "yes." National Election Board (JNE) President Enrique Mendoza previously stated that should the bill fail to pass, all votes will be counted, including null and blank votes, thereby raising the barrier for passage of the referenda. In addition, he said, all departments that would comprise each individual macro-region must vote in favor for the macro-region to be established.

[¶](#)3. COMMENT: The failure to pass the bill was a defeat for the Government, which campaigned hard for its passage. It also undercut the authority of Unidad Nacional leader Lourdes Flores, who could not control her alliance's legislative bloc despite making a public bid for its support. With all votes being counted, blank and null ballots will effectively count in the "no" column, making it that much more difficult for the referenda to pass. END COMMENT.

STRUBLE